

F4T Saves Panel Space For Customer



The F4T with INTUITION® process controller has the capability to replace multiple other components in a thermal system. While some Watlow customers have recognized a cost savings from this advantage, for others the benefit is much more tangible.

One Watlow customer builds industrial process heating systems. Often, they are skidded systems for natural gas production with control panels built directly on the skids. Because there are so many components for each system, space within the panels is a premium.

“They have to punch a hole in the panels for everything: temperature controls, limit controls and various instrumentation. For every heater, they may have single loop control but maybe six or eight zones,” said Matt Dicen, outside sales engineer. “With all of this equipment, the panels have gotten bigger and bigger to accommodate it all.”

The F4T has the capability to replace other components depending on the modules added to it. For example, a single F4T can replace four PID controllers for four zones of control. Limit control can be added reducing another component in the system. While it creates needed space in the panels, it has the potential to save money for customers by reducing the amount of equipment they have to purchase.

“Say a system has need for multiple zones with limit control. The F4T offers flexibility by providing flex modules to address control or limit needs and configured to their customer’s specific requirements,” Matt said.

The customer’s engineer contacted Watlow to ask about temperature controls. Matt followed up and performed a typical needs analysis with the customer. That led to showing them the F4T process controller.

“I took an F4T demo and spent a day walking them through it before leaving it with them. They discovered the math and logic capabilities on their own,” Matt said. “They really liked the configuration software, which meant they didn’t have to go through a massive user manual to use it.”

Before a project came up where the company could install the F4T, the customer purchased a small number of base modules for prototyping on a test panel. Other engineers needed to get onboard with switching from a competitor’s component. “It’s not a one-for-one comparison. It’s not one costs more than the other, it’s a complete system overhaul,” Matt said.

Through the process of integrating the F4T into the company’s panels, the customer’s engineers realized they could standardize panel size across the business, Matt said. By having a standard size, the customer can build the panels more quickly, efficiently and at a lower cost because of less customization.